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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 000037

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN OFFERS TO HOST A SPRING GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO COMBAT NUCLEAR TERRORISM CONFERENCE

ASTANA 00000037 001.2 OF 002

REFTEL: 09 ASTANA 1541

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) This is an action request (see para 9).

¶3. (SBU) SUMMARY: On January 6, Post received a Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs' diplomatic note (see para 7), which outlined Kazakhstan's proposal to hold a Global Initiative to Counter Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) conference in Astana in April or May 2010. On January 13, Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director of the Security Division of the Multilateral Cooperation Department, Anvar Tanalinov, asked PolOff and two Russian Federation representatives if the United States and Russia, as GICNT co-chairs, would support Kazakhstan's initiative. Tanalinov also requested U.S. and Russian suggestions on the event's timing, topic, and audience. Post recommends support for this initiative and seeks guidance for a response. END SUMMARY.

KAZAKHSTAN RESURRECTS PLAN TO HOST NON-PROLIFERATION EVENT

¶4. (SBU) During a January 13 meeting, Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director of the Security Division of the Multilateral Cooperation Department, Anvar Tanalinov told PolOff and Russian representatives that Kazakhstan seeks to hold a meaningful, timely, and substantive workshop. He asserted Kazakhstan wants to host the event to meet the needs of the GICNT community, not merely to satisfy its own national interests. (COMMENT: Kazakhstan hosted two Global Initiative exercises in 2008, and had announced its intention to host two more exercises in 2009. These 2009 proposed exercises were postponed indefinitely, reportedly due to Kazakhstani government budget constraints as a result of the economic crisis. END COMMENT.)

AGENDA TO BE COUNTERING TERRORISM AND ENHANCING NUCLEAR SECURITY

¶5. (SBU) In response to Counselor of the Russian Embassy Vladimir Kuznetsov's query about possible topics and intended participation,

Tanalinov emphasized Kazakhstan's openness "to any agenda related to combating nuclear terrorism and enhancing the physical security of nuclear facilities and materials." Tanalinov stated Kazakhstan's plan to invite representatives of all government agencies with counter-terrorism responsibilities in the fields of nuclear and radiological materials, as well as those who guarantee the security of nuclear facilities and liaise with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). He also underlined that target participants would include representatives of special forces and academic institutions with nuclear-security related responsibilities.

Tanalinov said the event would be geared toward senior experts, not Ministers. Kazakhstan's Anti-Terrorist Center and Ministry of Foreign Affairs would organize the event, with the participation of specialists from the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of Interior.

KAZAKHSTAN FLEXIBLE ON TIMING

¶6. (SBU) Underscoring Kazakhstan's desire for the event to complement the U.S. Government's April 12-13 Global Nuclear Security Summit, Tanalinov expressed the Kazakhstani government's willingness to hold the event before or after the summit. Nonetheless, Tanalinov highlighted Kazakhstan's readiness to consider other proposed times should April not be suitable for the United States or Russia. Most importantly, Tanalinov emphasized, Kazakhstan needs two months to plan adequately. Tanalinov, therefore, requested that the United States inform Kazakhstan by February if it concurs with Kazakhstan's plan to host an April event.

¶7. (SBU) An unofficial translation of the Kazakh-language text of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' diplomatic note number 10-2/11 follows.

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BEGIN TEXT:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America, and informs the United States that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan proposes holding a Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism conference in Astana in April or May 2010. In case of approval, the dates, agenda, and participants of the seminar can be coordinated via diplomatic channels.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan avails itself of this occasion to renew to the Embassy of the United States of America the assurances of its highest consideration.

END TEXT.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: While the initial reaction of some might be that this is part of a cynical effort to counteract the recent Associated Press article alleging a possible effort by "some elements" in Kazakhstan to smuggle 1,350 tons of yellowcake uranium to Iran, there is reason to look at this proposal objectively. In recognition of Kazakhstan's accomplishments and nearly two decades of strong cooperation on non-proliferation issues (reftel), as well as to assist its continued efforts to combat nuclear proliferation and ensure the security of nuclear facilities and materials, Post strongly recommends support for Kazakhstan's offer. END COMMENT.

¶9. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests guidance on responding to Kazakhstan's proposal, including specific recommendations regarding timing, agenda, and suggested participants for this event.

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